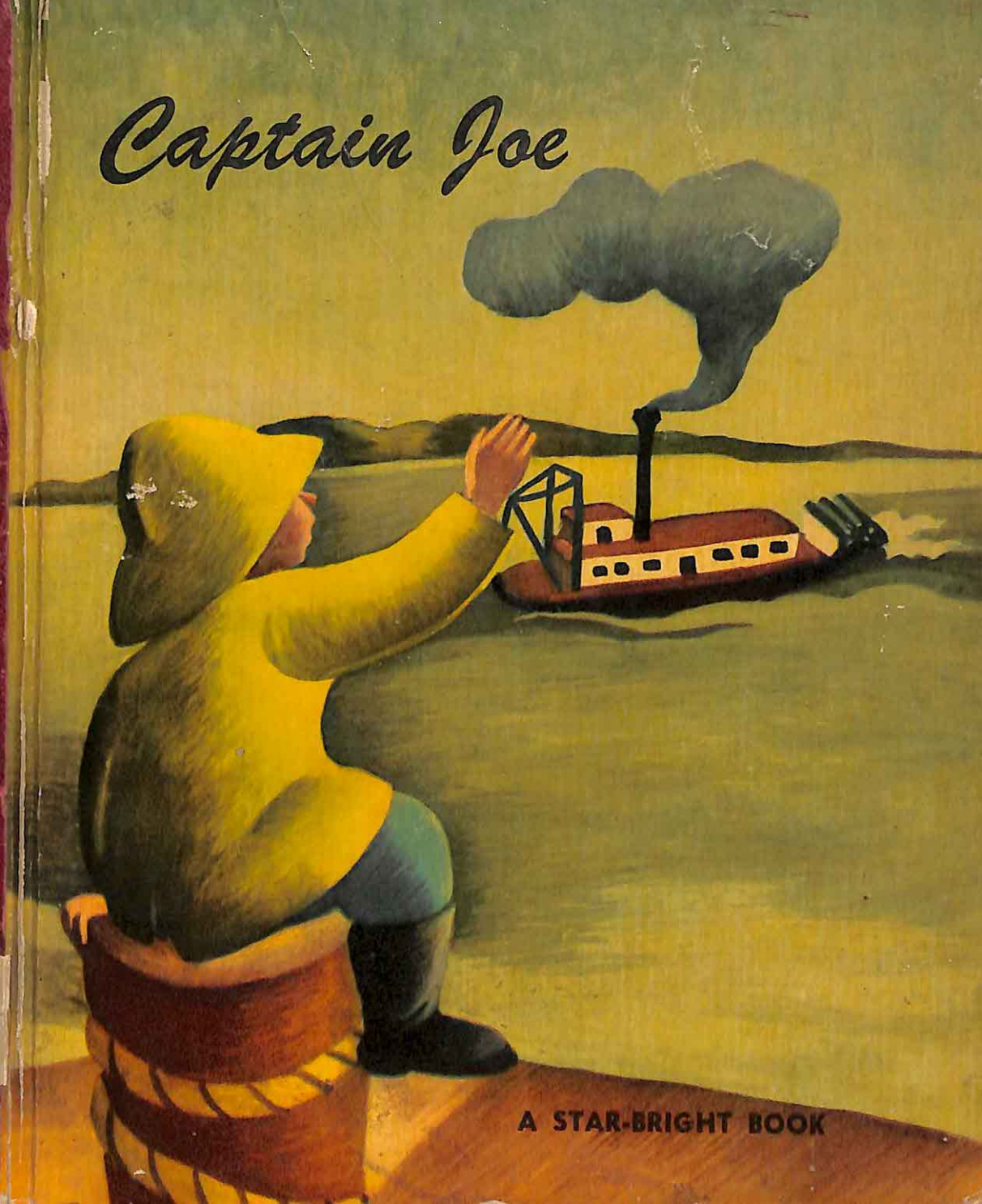
Captain Joe



A STAR-BRIGHT BOOK

CHILDRENS BOOKS
ARE IMPORTANT

Captain Joe

BY MARGARET FRISKEY

ILLUSTRATED BY KATHERINE EVANS

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Joe ran home from school with his books over his shoulder.

He stopped suddenly when he reached the river. His house was gone.

He sat down under a tree. He could wait.

Joe lived on a boat. It was a sand barge called the Molly-O. Joe's father went up the river every day to pick up a load of sand. He would stop for Joe on his way down to the gravel yard.

Tommy came along with his dog, Scamp.
"Hello, Joe," said Tommy.

"You are lucky to live on a boat," said Tommy. "A real boat."

"I know," said Joe. "I like it. I like the river, too. But I can't have a dog. Mom says a boat is no place for a dog."

He tossed a stick into the river and Scamp went after it and laid it dripping in Joe's lap.

"Good dog!" said Joe. And Scamp shook river water all over him.

"Where is all this water going?" asked Tommy.

"To the sea," said Joe.

"Oh," said Tommy. "Well it is going so fast pretty soon the river will be gone."

"Gone?" Joe sat up. Maybe Tommy was right. He and Pop and the Molly-O couldn't get along without the river.

The Molly-O came around the bend. There was a puff of steam from the whistle. One long blast and one short one cut the air.

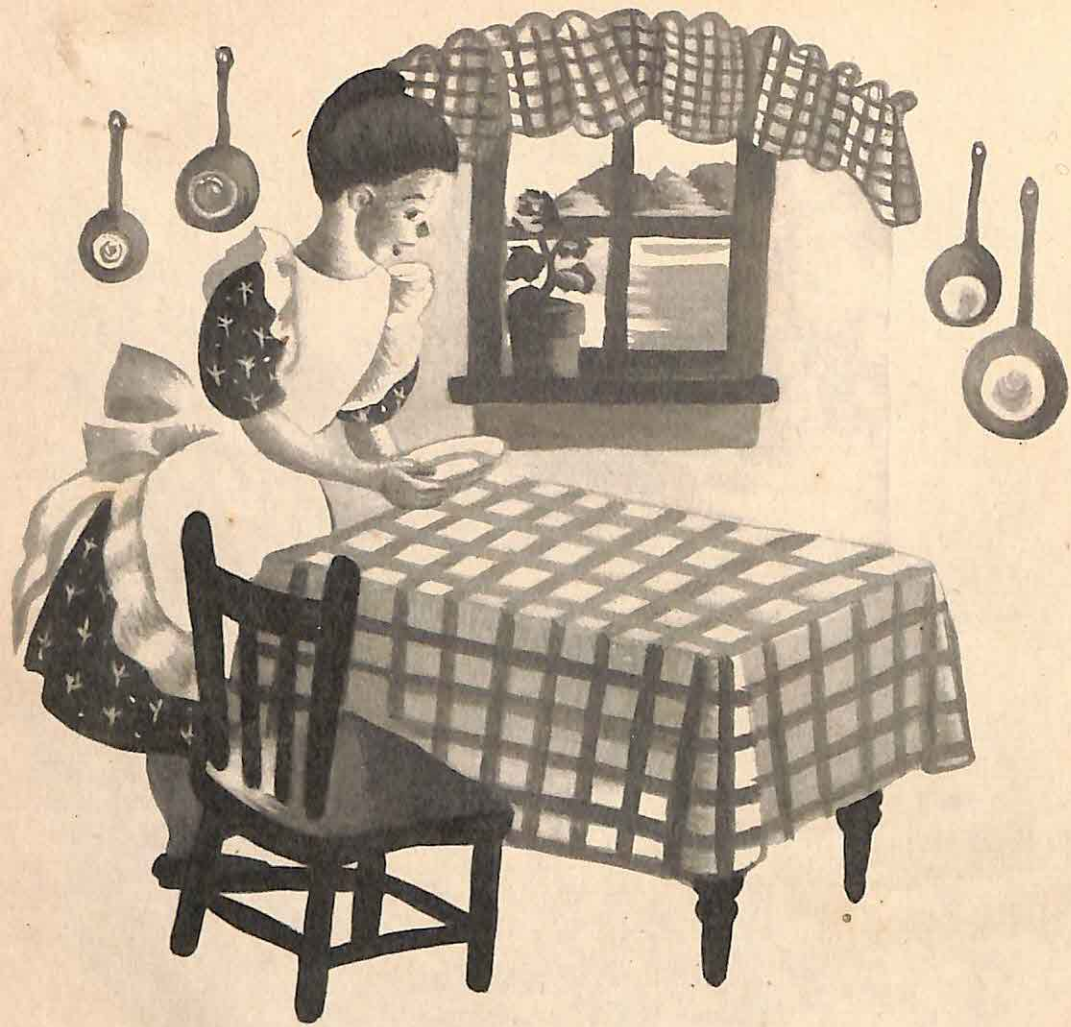
"The hailing whistle," said Joe. "Pop's coming in for me."

The stern wheel of the Molly-O was kicking the river into foam.

Joe could see Pop in the wheelhouse as the barge nosed into the dock. He jumped aboard and the Molly-O backed away and headed down the river.

Joe waved to Tommy and went into the cabin to leave his books.

MOLLY O



Mom was setting the table for supper. Joe kissed her and tossed his books on a chair and started out the door.

"What's your hurry?" asked Mom.

"I want to ask Pop about the river," said Joe. He turned to go but stopped when he heard a muffled whimper from a box in the corner.

In a flash Joe was on his knees by the box. He gathered up the bundle of fur and blanket.

"A dog!" he breathed. His eyes questioned his mother.

"Pop picked him up in the river a way back," said Mom. "Must have fallen off another boat."

"Or somebody tried to drown him," said Joe. "May I keep him?" He held his breath and waited for an answer.

"A boat's no place for a dog, Joe. We'll have to find a home for him."

Joe carried the dog with him to the wheelhouse. He could feel that little dog heart beating through the blanket.

"Will the river be gone some day?" asked Joe.

"No," said Pop. "I don't think so."

"Where does all the water come from?" asked Joe.

"About three quarters of the earth is water," said Pop. "Much of it is in the rivers, lakes, and oceans. There are many streams underground, too. It is raining or snowing somewhere all the time. Many tons of water fall every minute."

"But where does all the rain come from?"

"It comes from the rivers and the oceans and the fields and the forests."

"You're fooling."

"No, Joe. Every minute water is returning to the air as vapor."

"I can't see any water in the air," said Joe.

"That's because water vapor is a gas. You can't see gas. But as it rises and cools off it turns back into little droplets of water and collects in clouds. These you can see."

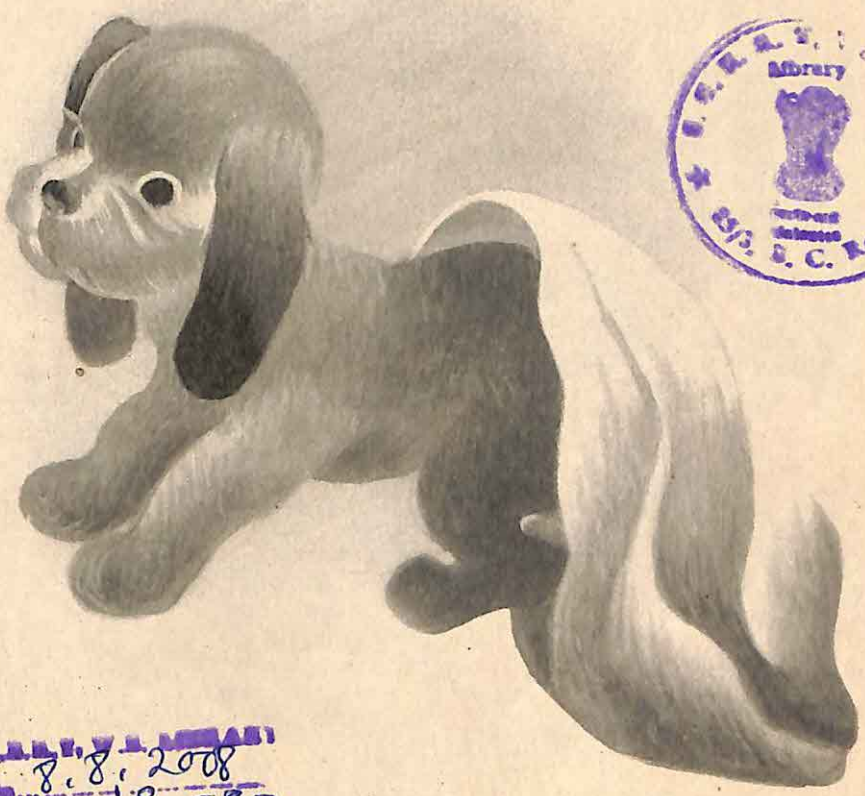
"You mean part of this river is up there in those clouds?" asked Joe.

"That's right. All the leaves of growing things give off water vapor, too. See that field of corn over there?"

"Yes."

"I've heard that one acre of corn gives off about ninety barrels of water a day. It's an endless circle, Joe. It's all the same water over and over again. As the clouds cool off they drop the rain which waters the crops. It drains off through streams and rivers to the ocean. Some of it is returning to the air all of the time so that it can rain again. Nothing can live without water, Joe."

The little dog wiggled out of the blanket, shook himself, stretched and looked around the wheelhouse.



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Joe lay on his back on the sand in the barge and watched a parade of clouds march across the sky.

"Pop knows everything," said Joe.

The little dog was more interested in a dragon fly.

"If I could keep you," said Joe, "I would call you *Bosun.* You'd be a member of the crew."

Mike was Pop's helper. Mike took the wheel while the family had supper.

"Does snow come from the clouds, too?" asked Joe.

"When air has lots of water vapor in it and the temperature is below freezing, tiny particles of ice form. These form snowflakes and fall as snow. When rain freezes on its way down, we have sleet. Sometimes ice forms in cold air and then moves through warmer air currents where it collects a layer of moisture which then freezes in colder air. These pieces of ice may bounce up and down in air currents until they have several layers of ice and then there is hail."

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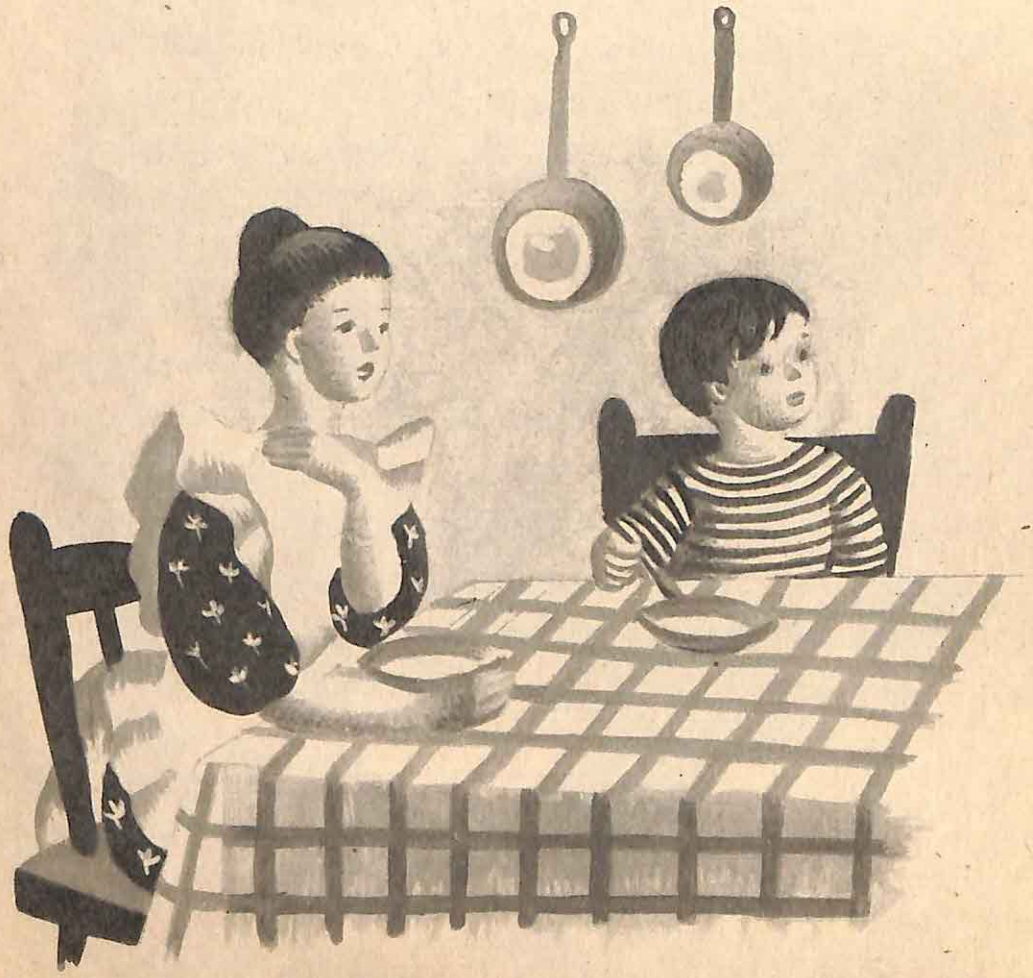
While they were finishing their apple sauce and cookies there were three sharp toots on the boat's whistle.

"Something wrong!" cried Pop, pushing back his chair.



Fog! It had wrapped up the river, the shore, and the boat in its soft folds.

"Now you can see the water in the air," said Pop. "The vapor has cooled and turned to tiny drops of water. Fog is a cloud that is near the earth."

The water in the fog cloud clung to Joe's clothes and to his hair.

The boat crept ahead slowly.

The fog lifted long enough for Pop to see the dock at the gravel yard. He eased the boat up to it and tied it. He used one heavy line from the bow and one from the stern.

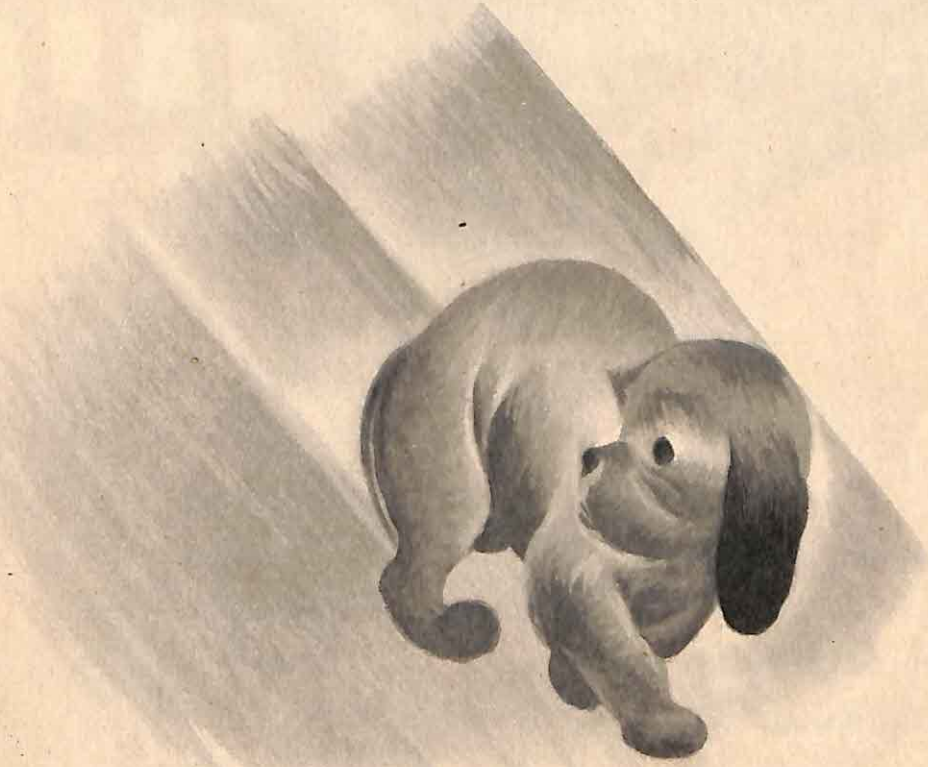
"You and Bosun look after Mom and the boat," said Pop. "Mike and I will go ashore and see if they can unload this sand before it rains."

Slowly the fog lifted. Clouds raced across the sky.

Joe played with Bosun on the deck. He felt the wind shift and looked up. Thunder rumbled in the distance.

Bosun dropped his tail between his legs.

"Why, you silly," said Joe, picking him up. "Thunder is nothing but the sound of air rushing into the path made by lightning. Pop told me that."



Joe went to his cabin and curled up with a book.

Bosun lay across his feet with one eye open.

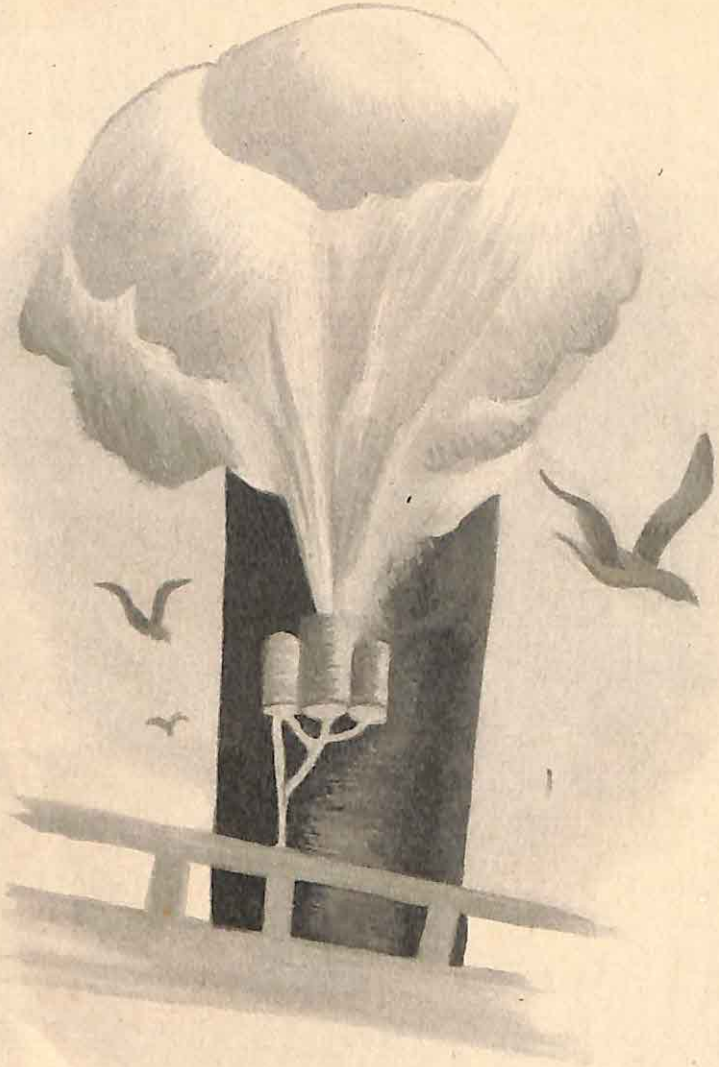
A gust of wind rattled the window. Bosun barked and jumped off the bunk.

Joe sat up. He felt the boat moving.

Up on deck Joe could see that the stern line had let go in the gust of wind and Molly-O was swinging out into the current of the river.

"How can I let Pop know?" thought Joe.

Then with Bosun at his heels he raced for the wheelhouse.



Joe grabbed the cord on the whistle.
One long blast and one short one.
One long blast and one short one.
The hailing whistle.

Pop and Mike came on the run.

They secured the boat and came aboard.

"Nice work, Joe," said Pop. "We would never have this sand unloaded before the rain if both lines had gone."

"Bosun gave the alarm," said Joe. "He's a real sailor. He was the first to feel the boat swinging." Joe picked up the dog and scratched his ear. "He's an awful nice dog. Smart, too."

Mom had come on deck. "Maybe a boat isn't such a bad place for a *smart* dog," she said.

Joe held the dog off at arm's length. "You're a member of the crew!" he shouted. Then he bolted for his cabin to hide his tears behind a closed door.

Joe could hear the steam shovel unloading sand as he lay in his bunk. He could hear the soft lap, lap of the river against the hull. He could feel the warm lump of Bosun curled up on the foot of the bunk.

Joe sighed happily and slept with his knees under his chin. No use crowding a new member of the crew.

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